

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 64 issued January 2007

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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible With the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham

“Paul, thou art beside thyself” – A Strange Charge (The Pastor’s Letter)

Dear Friends,

One of the most consistent and persistent charges that is made against Evangelical Christianity is that it “turns the brain” of those who involve themselves in it. “Paul, thou art beside thyself”, Festus told the great apostle as he preached before King Agrippa, “much learning doth make thee mad.”

It was no new charge, of course, for the disciples themselves, on the day of Pentecost, were accused of being “full of new wine”, while the Lord Jesus was told He “had a devil”, and away back in the Old Testament, it was said of one of the prophets, “Wherefore came this mad fellow unto me?” No doubt Paul had shown a good measure of “warmth” and vigour as he preached before Agrippa that day, and as far as Festus was concerned, there was no better way to ward-off the blows of truth than with the old, well-tried accusation of madness and fanaticism. Festus knew his stuff, for is it not a charge that can sometimes throw us off our course, because it is a charge that levels itself at the pride of the human heart, for none of us want to be thought anything other than to be in obvious possession of all our faculties.

It’s a strange charge, of course; and it would seem that a man or a woman can indulge in any pursuit to any degree without coming under scathing stricture by those around them. It seems that people can climb to the highest peaks of mountains and plunge to their deaths below; they can burrow into the bowels of the earth, get stuck there, and have rescue teams toiling all night to get them out; they can hurtle round race tracks at 150 miles an hour and flash into hell at the turn of a wheel; they can hang from kites until they fall from them like a stone to the ground – BUT, they cannot see to the eternal welfare of their never-dying soul without being deemed some kind of a mad person, such as Paul, and a million others have been deemed.

Its another well-tried shield and weapon that Festus falls back on when he reckons to know the “source” of Paul’s madness in this business of Christianity. “Paul, thou art beside thyself, much-learning doth make thee mad.” But Paul’s reply is a model for any of us – both with regards to being confident in the Word of eternal life; “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

There was a time, indeed, when Paul reckoned himself something like a madman; when he persecuted the Church of Christ and fought against the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
Those shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
But drinking largely sobers it again.”

How true on almost any subject. Get a few facts and we become drunk with their possession. The best way to “sober-up” is to take a deeper drink, and then, what a different view the whole thing takes on. So in the things of salvation. It is the shallow draughts of what the Bible has to say that absolutely intoxicate the brains of many men and women. But to drink deeper – with regards to sin and salvation, heaven and hell, the devil and God – then it is to be “sober”, through the Word of “truth and soberness” itself. Like the man in the miracle, “Whereas I was blind, now I see;” Paul is saying, “Whereas I was mad and drunk, now I am sane and sober.” It is a virtual epitome of gospel grace that is pictured for us in the Gadarene demoniac after Christ has released him from his “madness;” when the people see him, “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.” We need feel no intimidation: - “Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in His Name.” May God be with us.

Yours Sincerely
W.J. Seaton.



Muckle Kate Not a very ordinary name! But then, Muckle Kate, or Big Kate, or Kate-Mhor, or Kate of Lochcarron was not a very ordinary woman! The actual day of her salvation is difficult to trace to its sunrising, but being such a glorious day as it was, we simply wish to relate something of what shone forth in the redeemed life of that “ill-looking woman without any beauty in the sight of God or man.”

Muckle Kate was born and lived in Lochcarron in the county of Ross-shire. By the time she had lived her life to its eighty-fifth year she had well-earned the reputation of having committed every known sin against the Law of God with the exception murder. Speaking after the manner of men, if it took “Grace Abounding” to save a hardened sinner like John Bunyan, it was going to take “Grace Much More Abounding” to save Muckle Kate. However, Grace is Sovereign and cannot be thwarted when God sends it on the errand of salvation, and even the method used in bring Muckle Kate into the day of full salvation only serves to magnify that wonder-working power.

Lachlan MacKenzie, Minister at Lochcarron, had laboured long and hard to bring the old sinful Kate under the sound of God's Word, but to no avail, for Kate flatly refused to so much as set her foot within the four walls of the Minister's Kirk.

Knowing, however, that it was Kate's custom to attend the local "ceilidhs", Mr. Lachlan – as the Godly old minister was affectionately known – decided to take a rather more unorthodox road to show the old sinner her perilous state. Sitting down at his desk one day he wrote a song, listing all of Kate's known sins and heaven's judgments against them. This composition was then given to one of the "singers" of the "ceilidhs" who, in turn, sang the song in the hearing of Kate of Lochcarron.

The result was shattering to the conscience of Muckle Kate and from the very first line of the song, it would seem, she fell into the deepest conviction of soul and began to pour out her heart before the Lord. The hills around Lochcarron began to shake and to echo with her weeping and in course of time poor Kate wept away her eyesight and became physically, as well as spiritually, blind. That physical eyesight was never to be restored again in this life, but spiritual eyesight was to be given to her to "look" unto Him and be saved, and to taste and to "see" that the Lord is good.

The Day of her Salvation was perhaps the closing day of one of the Communion seasons at Lochcarron. Kate had no intention of going near the "blessed Ordinance" and she had made this plain to her Minister; she had been sorrowing now for three whole years, but had still found no assurance that Christ had given her His peace. "I go forward to that Holy Table!" she said, "I who have had my arms up to the shoulders in a Saviour's blood!" And as the sermons for the day were preached and the bread and the wine served to the communicants Muckle Kate sat through it all still under the burden of the wrath of God upon her soul.

At last, it was all over and the benediction pronounced. Kate, believing that she was once more alone in the hillside where the communion had been held returned to her sorrows and crying and her piercing cry once more rent the air. The congregation homeward bound, were arrested in their steps and their interests. The congregation, however, was not alone in viewing the burdened old sinner crying for mercy before the heavens of God that appeared as brass unto her, for, Mr. Lachlan was watching, too. Going forward to the aged sinner, he took her by the hand and led her to where the communion tables still stood. Placing the bread and the wine of Christ's Atonement before her, he exhorted her to eat and to drink, and there, unconscious of the thousands of eyes upon her, Muckle Kate ate "his flesh and drank his blood" and until the day of her death, when she was almost ninety, showed forth the praises of Him who had called her by His grace in such an unusual way.

"Tell them that the worst of sinners," she used to say thereafter, "Tell them that the worst of sinners – the drunkard, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, the scoffer, the infidel – tell them that I, a living embodiment of every sin, even I, have found a Saviour's Person, even I have known a Saviour's love."

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

by
Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

At this time of year you will have been given presents. No doubt when you received your presents you will have used them and want to use them, but I once read of a man who was given a present, but who didn't use it at all and so, it was no good to him.

This man was walking along the street one day when the rain began to fall very heavily. A butcher, who was standing in the doorway of his shop, saw this man begin to run along the street to escape the rain and so, he called him to come into his shop and he would give him something to help to keep him dry. The man went into the shop and the butcher presented him with a great big black umbrella – (perhaps, your father has one just like it). The man was very thankful for the present and he thanked the butcher for being so kind to him. When the man got outside into the rain again, however, what do you think the man did? Well, he took the umbrella, but instead of opening it out and putting it over his head, he kept it closed and he put it under his coat and began to walk along in the rain once more.

As he was walking along in the rain, he met another man. “Why don't you put your umbrella up?” asked the man, who saw the handle of it sticking out of the man's coat. “Oh,” said the man, “that butcher along there was so good and so kind to give me a present of this nice umbrella that I don't want to get it wet and so, I've put it under my coat.”

What a silly man, you might think; and, of course, he was silly because the butcher had given him that umbrella to keep him dry and umbrellas are meant to get wet anyway. But, you know, boys and girls, sometimes people are like that when it comes to the Bible. God has given us the present of His Word – the Bible – so that we might read it and learn about Him. But some people never open the Bible and only use it to carry it to church and home again. I hope that you will “Read your Bible, and pray every day.”

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 27)

David here sets us a pattern for prayer. It is more than just falling to the knees and speaking out our requests. The prayer itself is contained only in verses 7 to 12, the first six verses being a preparation for prayer where David recalls God's mighty acts as a ground

of confidence for seeking the Lord's blessings now. If God has been with him in six troubles, He will not desert him in seven. The last two verses are a vindication of prayer answered and an exhortation for other to pray. "I had fainted, unless" "Wait on the Lord"

Verse 1. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; WHOM SHALL I FEAR?" When Alice Driver was examined before her martyrdom she put all her accusers to shame. "Have you no more to say?," she asked them, as they looked at one another unable to quench the "light" that God had given her and unable to make her afraid. "God be honoured," she told them, "you be not able to resist the Spirit of God, in me, a poor woman. I was never brought up at the University as you have been; yet, notwithstanding, in the defence of God's truth, and in the cause of my Master, Christ – by His grace – I will set my foot against any of you. And if I had a thousand lives they should go for payment of that Truth." She was then led to her death.

Verse 3. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear ..." Those who are willing to be combatants FOR God shall also be more than conquerors THROUGH God. None are so truly courageous as those who are truly religious. If a Christian live, he knows by whose grace he stands; and if he die, he knows for whose sake he falls. Where there is no confidence IN God, there will be no continuance WITH God. When the wind of faith ceases to fill the sails, the ship of obedience ceases to plough the seas.

William Secker

Verse 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord ... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord ..." In the beginnings of the Psalm, David keeps an audit of his soul's accounts, reckoning up; the large incomes and lasting treasures of God's bounty and grace. And now, where shall David design his presence, but where his light is, and his strength, and his life, and his salvation – even in communion with his God: and especially in the holy worship of his sanctuary. No wonder then, if above all things he desires and seeks after this "one thing ... to dwell in the house of the Lord" all his days.

Robert Mossom

Verse 5. "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me ..." Title – The Believer's Hiding Places:

1. "In his pavilion." The royal pavilion was erected in the centre of the army, and around it all the mighty men kept guard at all hours. Thus in divine sovereignty, which almighty power is sworn to maintain, the believer is peacefully hidden.
2. "In the secret of his tabernacle." Sacrifice aids sovereignty in screening the Elect from the harm. No one of old dared to enter the most holy place on pain of death. And if the Lord hath hidden His people there, what foe shall venture to molest them?
3. "Upon a rock." Immutability, eternity, and infinite power here come to the aid of sovereignty and sacrifice. How blessed is the standing of the man whom God himself sets up high above his foes, upon an impregnable rock which never can be stormed.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 8. “When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek.” We see here this much that God must BEGIN with us, before we can CLOSE IN with Him. God must seek us, before we can seek Him. God must first desire that we should draw near to Him, before we are able to draw near unto Him. “Thou saidst, seek my face;” and then, and not until then, “My heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

Thomas Horton.

Verse 9. “... put not thy servant away in anger ...” God puts away many in anger for their supposed goodness, but not any at all for their confessed badness.”

John Trapp

Verse 11. “Teach me thy way, O Lord ...” Having compared himself to an exposed, deserted infant, adopted by God, he now asks to be shown how to walk. He asks the grace of being able to observe all God’s holy commandments, which he never loses sight of throughout the whole of the psalms. What else could he do when it was the only path to that heavenly house of God, which he had just declared to be the only wish and desire of his heart?

R. Bellarmine

The Refiner’s Fire

Some time ago, a few ladies met in a certain city to read the Scriptures, and make them the subject of conversation. While reading the third chapter of Malachi they came upon a remarkable expression in the third verse. “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

One lady’s opinion was that it was intended to convey the view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ. Then she proposed to visit a silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly and without telling the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver, which he full described to her.

“But sir,” she said, “do you sit while the work of refining is going on?”

“Oh, yes madam,” replied the silversmith; “I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured.”

The lady at once saw the beauty, and comfort too, of the expression. “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” Christ sees it needful to put His children, into a furnace; His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying and His wisdom and love are both

engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back, and said he had still further to mention, that only knew when the process of purifying was complete, by seeing his own image reflected in the silver. Beautiful example! When Christ shall see His own image in His people, His work of purifying will be accomplished.

Author unknown.

Prayer Time

By Ruby Weyburn Tobias

And while she darns the children’s socks,
She prays for the little stumbling feet;
Each folded pair within its box
Fits faith’s bright sandals, sure and fleet.

While washing out, with mother pains,
Small, dusty suits, and frocks, and slips,
She prays that God may cleanse the stains
From little hands, and hearts, and lips.

And when she breaks the fragrant bread,
Or pours a portion in each cup,
For grace to keep their spirits fed
Her mother-heart is lifted up.

O busy ones, whose souls grow faint
Whose tasks seem longer than the day,
It doesn’t take a cloistered saint
To find a little time to pray.

Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs

(Part 8)

Chapter 2 verse 15. “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.” The young Bride of the Song of Solomon has now been called out of her “winter house” into the place of security by the side of her Beloved.

The prospect that lies before her, as we see in the final verses of this chapter, is that one day her Beloved will return for her to “the mountains of Bethel”. Before that day comes, however, the harvest of the vine must be gathered in, and, as she is “the keeper of the vineyard”, than she must play her part in the gathering of that harvest. There is one great hindrance, however, to an early harvest, and that is “the little foxes that spoil the vines,” and so, the young Bride solicits the help of the strong arm of her beloved in the vintage song that she addresses to him in this verse 15: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”

Once again, the spiritual strains should be sweet to the believer’s ear as he remembers that Christ will one day come again for His own Church. Christ died to redeem His church, the apostle Paul reminds us; and one day the whole harvest of that seed that was planted on that day when Christ gave His back to the smiters and when they made “deep furrows” upon His back, is going to be reaped. ALL the harvest will be safely gathered in – every soul for whom Christ died; “ALL that the Father giveth me SHALL come to me.” And to the believer is given the command and the privilege to “Go work in my vineyard”, so that we are “the keepers of the vineyard”, under Christ, to gather in that harvest that will herald His coming again.

“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Will never lose its power;
‘Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

How many hindrances, though, in the glorious work? Little foxes that spoil the vines”! Little sins such as Demas must have dabbled in until he “fell in love with the world” and was no longer a “fellowlabourer”. How we should know and recognise them. And how we should know the only way of dealing with them; by soliciting the strong arm of our Beloved to “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines.”